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Atari Online News, Etc.  
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->From the Editor's Keyboard  
"~~~~~"

"Saying it like it is!"

Well, the party is over! The last of my Thanksgiving leftovers disappeared today. I guess I'll go through a short period of withdrawal but it will pass. I have to admit, though, it was great while it lasted!

The holiday "madness" has started. My wife and her mother started their holiday shopping on Black Friday; and it continued throughout the long weekend. It should be an interesting holiday, gift-wise. We usually shop together and pick up items that we each would like; so we usually know what we're getting "from" each other. One of my gifts, but one I know that my wife will attach herself is an Atari Flashback console! She's addicted to a couple of the old Atari games, so I know I'll catch her sitting in front of the widescreen TV playing Centipede, after the holidays!

The cold is starting to settle into the area lately. They are even predicting some snow this weekend, but we all know that's subject to change daily! At least I finally have the yard cleaned up of leaves, or at least the bulk of them. The trees aren't bare just yet, so I may have to head out one more time, and then call it a season! Everything else that I needed to close up for the winter months has been dealt with, so I should be all set, I hope!

So, it's otherwise been a quiet week, so let's get down to the really interesting stuff for this week.

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING  
compiled by Joe Mirando  
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone, and I've got yet another pet peeve to share with you. Yeah, I know... you're thinking, "Great. Another missive about something stupid and annoying", right?

Well, this is something that has ticked me off for years and years. It's about the imprecision often used in writing or speaking which often passes for style or editorial license.

Now you're probably saying, "What the hell is he talking about now?", right? Well, let me explain. I was reading an article online this morning, on one of my favorite websites, Space.Com, when the dreaded convoluted turn of phrase turned up.

"Both stars are about 1 million years old, which is 10 times younger than other known planet-forming systems."

Do you see it? Can someone please explain to me how something can be 'ten times younger' than something else? It's like saying something that has a lower price than something else costs 'more less'.

It's right up there with saying "it's the same difference". I might expect it of someone who's uneducated or is running for Miss Teen USA, but to see it in a scientific/technological setting is just unacceptable. What's next? Reading in the New England Journal of Medicine that 10 out of 8 people responding to a poll admit that the influenza virus makes them feel 'oogie'?

The correct phrase, by the way, would be "Both stars are about 1 million years old, which is one tenth the age of other known planet-forming systems."

There. That wasn't so hard, was it? Well, let's get to the news and stuff, before I start wailing on all those other annoying little phrases. Okay?

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup  
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Last week, Roger Burrows posted this about the release of his SCSI/LINK drivers:

"I've uploaded new versions of the SCSI/Link drivers for STiNG and MintNet to the Anodyne Software web site; you can download them from this URL:  
<http://www.anodynesoftware.com/ethernet/main.htm> "

Hallvard Tangeraas asks Roger:

"I'm curious.. just how well does the Daynaport Link SCSI solution work compared to the other ethernet solutions available for our platform? Speed, reliability etc?

As my cartridge port is already filled up with several other devices using a NetUSBee is out of the question (besides, it doesn't seem to be available any longer: <http://hardware.atari.org/netusbee/netus.htm>). The EtherNEA and Ethernet Adapter II (<http://www.asamnet.de/~hilgarte/>) seems unavailable as well (the author doesn't reply to his email), so apart from the NetUSBee nothing else apart from the Daynaport Link setup seems to be available if you want to network an STe using Ethernet. Correct me if I'm wrong.

According to the Anodyne page

(<http://www.anodynesoftware.com/ethernet/main.htm>), the Daynaport seems to be a fully working solution, but the warning about the possibility of it interfering with the I/O of the hard drive scares me. I'm reading between the lines that the Daynaport is a highly experimental solution which might or might not work well in the long run. I'm not sure if I want to take that risk.

I'd like to hear from others who have been using this sort of setup, and also if there are other Ethernet solutions available (after all, finding a Daynaport Link seems to be both hard and expensive -and yes, I've searched eBay etc.).

We really could need someone to bring back the EtherNEA and/or Ethernet Adapter II projects by Elmar Hilgart and Thomas Redelberger:  
<http://home.arcor.de/thomas.redelberger/prj/atari/etherne/index.htm>  
<http://www.asamnet.de/~hilgarte/>

At present, rough schematics etc. are available for the EtherNEA (from Thomas' site above), but if you're not an engineer who can figure out the rest yourself it's simply not a simple "etch-a-PCB-and-solder" type project.

The Ethernet Adapter II

(<http://www.asamnet.de/~hilgarte/acsi2ether2.php>) looks like an even better solution because it has everything available on one PCB (unlike the EtherNEA which needs a separate NE-2000 ISA ethernet board), but for that one no schematics or further information is available at all. It seems that only a single prototype has been made, then scrapped. Something which surprises me as there's an obvious demand for ethernet boards for the ST."

Roger replies:

"Speed is around 60-80 kBYTES/sec using STiNG, 100-140 kBYTES/sec on MintNet (this is on a TT). I have had no problems with reliability, and haven't had any bug reports, but that perhaps doesn't mean much ...

Interference with hard disk I/O is more of a potential problem under STiNG than MintNet. Because it does share the bus, and I \*really\* don't want a mob burning down my house if their hard drives get corrupted, I decided that a warning would be a good idea ...

Right now (well yesterday anyway) on eBay there were 3 suitable SCSI/Links available at prices between \$20 and \$35. I say nothing about the reliability/reputation of the sellers, but they are available at not-unreasonable prices."

'Mike' tells Roger:

"[It's] Been a couple of years since my Falcon and Dynaport link were setup. Aside from initially having issues with the configuration file for STiNG, it worked perfect direct connect to a cable modem. I'm guessing that speed is limited by the Falcon SCIS controller, but was more than fast enough for the Falcon 040.

With the holidays around the corner, I'm hoping have time at work for

my CT060 project I began last year. I cleaned off a Mighty Sonic installation and remade all connections to a standard board. It then got a really nice bath in Genesolve (had it stored away from the environmentalist). She is ready to be bench tested, then the proper mods made for running the bus a bit higher. I was suppose to ship the unit several times back to Mr. Cubza, but the plan never worked out on my end, and think he got tired of me saying "next week".

My new Milan project last year took up my Falcon time. It's all cased up really nice with software loaded. There were two projects that never materialized on that machine, one was to get the SCSI card working with the new drivers, never happened. Beat my brains out on that one, and two, install a 68060. I have the schematics for the adapter card, but was not successful in duplicating it's function and get the Milan to boot off the 060. Those two reasons for buying the machine have me thinking about putting it on the market. It works nice as an 040 at 33 Mhz, but I wanted it for rendering and it was a must for the SCSI to function for scanners and a few other toys I have.

I bought a bunch of old Sonic 040 speeder cards and variable clocks for the old Macs last year, and want to work on adapting them to either the Afterburner or Mighty Sonic to make speeding them up a bit less of a project. If successful, I'll post instructions, and of course put the spares I have up for sale."

Dave Wade adds:

"It needs a "proper" SCSI adapter, but won't work on many of the ASCII<=>SCSI solutions out there that don't implement SCSI pass through. I have used one on my TT, and apart from blocking the floppy its fine. If you have a suitable SCSI adapter I'll lend you one to try..."

Hallvard asks Dave:

"Which Ethernet solution are you referring to? (you quoted my entire posting where I discussed several solutions). Do you have an "Ethernet adapter II"? As for a "proper" SCSI host-adapter I'm assuming my Link 97 will work fine, at least from what I've heard."

Dave replies:

"The Daynaport.... (well actually labeled "Falleron" but its a re-badged Daynaport).

Roger says that will work provided you get power to it. Drop me an e-mail as above and you can borrow one to try. If you like it we can sort out its worth ....."

Roger jumps back in and adds this last piece of info:

"The only wrinkle is that the Link97 gets its power from the SCSI TermPWR line, and the SCSI/Link doesn't provide any power on that line. So you need something else on the SCSI chain that \*does\* provide TermPWR (most hard drives do or can be jumpered to do so).

I have tested the SCSI/Link with a Link97 and it works fine."

Roger now asks for info on the pinouts of the USB ports on his EtherNat board:

"I am (at last) going to connect up the USB ports on my EtherNat board. I need to know the correct pinouts, which unfortunately were not supplied with the board. I found a little discussion on the DHS web site, but the answer was ambiguous. I checked on the net for PC motherboard pinouts, and discovered that they varied. So now I'm asking here.

Here is a little ASCII drawing of the (male) connector on the board itself:

```
  A  B  C  D  E
  F  G  H  I  J
```

(the pin at location A is missing, presumably for keying purposes).

Can someone please tell me how the four USB signals for each port (+5V, Data-, Data+, Ground) map to the pins?"

Shortly thereafter, Roger posts:

"A follow-up to my previous post: Jan Thomas kindly provided the following info, using my little ASCII drawing of the (male) connector on the board itself:

```
  -  B  C  D  E
  F  G  H  I  J
```

. port A is the top row (pins B->E); port B is the bottom row (pins F-J)  
. the missing pin is a key  
. pin F is not connected  
. pins B/G are Ground; pins C/H are Data+; pins D/I are Data-; pins E/J are +5V

As noted, this info is also available via a link from the Nature web site (look on the Downloads page for the link)."

Alan Hourihane asks about his Falcon's NVRAM clock:

"O.k. so my Falcon's clock chip has died and it was the MK48T87B-24 variant. I've heard that the DS1287 works as a replacement or you can hack at the chip to expose the pins. Unfortunately mine was the hard top version and it broken away.

So I'm looking for a replacement device with a 24 pin socket.

Anyone ordered from somewhere before, preferably in the UK, but I'm quite happy if it's somewhere else.

I have googled, but I want to make sure it's the right device."

Derryck Croker tells Alan:

"Not all of these chips have the easily-removable top, as you've found.

You could try asking Maxim for a free sample - there's a form to fill out on their web site, or someone at the recent JagFest came up with the idea of ordering some of these chips and selling them on. Maybe someone in here will have some more info."

Stephen Moss adds:

"If you are desperate you can order them from Farnell, however by the time you add VAT as delivery you will be looking at about £12 or you could try getting a sample, just make sure you get the correct part, the DS12887 should be ok but the DS12887A has an extra pin.

I was the person approached at JagFest UK about ordering some as I work in electronics and I have an account with Farnell which will result in cheaper prices than that mentioned above, I am also looking at purchasing direct from Maxim which should be even cheaper. I am currently waiting for clarification from Maxim on a definition in their terms and conditions before I decide from where and in what quantity to purchase. I should have some DS12887s from one of these sources in the new year if you can wait until then."

Alan tells us:

"O.k., So RS Components have the 12887 as well at £7.20 a pop. So I've ordered one of those with a socket."

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they're saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Last Of The Great Exclusives?  
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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

## "Metal Gear Solid 4" Last Of The Great Exclusives?

"Metal Gear Solid 4" is not only one of the most eagerly awaited games for Sony's PlayStation 3, it is also among the last of a dying breed - games designed exclusively for one gaming console.

Developed by Japan's Konami and due out next year, the game is the latest installment in the action series that produced smash hits for Sony's earlier PlayStation 2.

It's a prime example of a game known in the industry as a "third party exclusive," as opposed to "first party" ones made by game-console makers Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo.

For years, the console makers have sought to secure such exclusives as a way to drive adoption of their machines.

"We're telling our fans that if you want to play 'Metal Gear Solid 4', you have to buy a PS3," said Ryan Payton, the assistant producer of the game.

"The PlayStation brand has always been good to us, and we're pretty bullish on the PS3."

But soaring production costs mean it's tougher for third-party games to turn a profit if they are limited to just one console. That's especially true for the PS3, sales of which have lagged those of the Xbox 360 and Wii.

Sony said it has been preparing for the demise of third-party exclusives for a long time.

"We understand publishers are needing to recoup their investment," said Peter Dille, senior vice president of marketing for Sony. "From our perspective, as long as the games aren't going exclusive to other platforms, PS3 gamers are not actually losing anything."

Sony has compensated by ramping up its own game production and has 15 internal studios working on PlayStation titles, more than Microsoft and Nintendo combined, Dille said.

He added that there will be 15 PS3 exclusives released between September 2007 and April 2008.

Payton said the new "Metal Gear Solid" needs to sell over a million copies on the first day it goes on sale due to its costly production, but that may be a tough mark to hit given sluggish PS3 sales.

As of October, only 2 million PS3s had been sold in the United States, compared to 5.2 million Wii consoles from rival Nintendo and 7.2 million Xbox 360s from Microsoft, according to market research firm NPD.

A year after its release, only two PS3 games have sold more than 1 million copies, a benchmark of financial success for a big-budget game. The 7-year-old PlayStation 2 had nearly 100 games sell more than a million copies.

Top next-generation video games cost between \$10 million and \$50 million, according to IDC videogame analyst Billy Pidgeon. That means publishers must hedge their bets by going onto as many platforms as possible.



"You might be able to weather one title coming in at 500,000 in sales," said Pidgeon. "But two or three failures like that and even big publishers are going to be hurting."

Several former PlayStation exclusives, including "Grand Theft Auto," "Virtua Fighter" and "Devil May Cry," are now appearing on rival consoles, making the benefits of purchasing a PS3 questionable to some hard-core game buyers.

Some people think even "MGS4" might not be compelling enough to turn the sales tide.

"No, 'Metal Gear Solid 4' isn't the killer app," said Adam Sessler, a video game critic on the G4 network. "People who already own a PS3 will likely get it. But it doesn't have that kind of broad-based appeal."

Still, the iconic nature of the game combined with a cheap new PS3 model could boost sales when the game hits the market in the second quarter of 2008.

"There are definitely a lot of people still sitting on the fence about buying a PS3, and this game could be the one that gets them to buy it," Pidgeon said.

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A-ONE's Headline News  
The Latest in Computer Technology News  
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Attention Shoppers: Here's Cyber Monday

Black Friday shoppers, meet Cyber Monday. The first Monday after Thanksgiving has now become a day when many online retailers offer sales comparable to their brick-and-mortar counterparts.

According to Shop.org, a trade group for online retailers, about 72 percent of its 120 members are offering special sales or promotions on Monday. Two years ago, that number was 42 percent.

"Online retailers consider Cyber Monday a virtual Black Friday," said Shop.org Executive Director Scott Silverman in a statement. His organization said it invented the term Cyber Monday in 2005 after some online retailers noticed a jump in online shopping in the Monday after Thanksgiving.

Shop.org said Internet retailers have stepped up their sales this year with "an assortment of one-day specials to send shoppers online."

This year's specials will include specific deals, one-day sales, or free shipping. Home Shopping Network online, for example, is offering free shipping as part of its "Cyber Monday Savings."

HomeDepot.com is having a "1-Day Online Savings Event" with several markdowns, while eToys.com is promoting a "special CyberMonday.com savings" of \$5 off an order of \$35 or more. Other retailers participating in Cyber Monday include Circuit City, JC Penney, Lands' End, and Sears.

To promote Monday's consumer delights, Shop.org features a guide to some of the online sales through its cybermonday.org site. Launched last year, the site now features more than 550 retailers.

According to Shop.org, those sales are targeting the 72 million consumers who will shop online on Monday from home or work, an increase from the 60.7 million in 2006 and the 59 million in 2005. Those figures come from a survey conducted for Shop.org by BIGresearch, which polled nearly 8,000 consumers over the last few weeks.

Some employers might eventually consider Cyber Monday to be a Black Monday in terms of productivity. Shop.org's survey said that 54.5 percent of office workers having Internet access will shop for gifts from work, a nearly 7.5 percent increase over last year. In particular, men are more likely to shop at work than are women, and young adults aged 18 to 24 are more likely than any other age group to shop.

Whether from home or work, Cyber Monday is taking hold. Andrew Frank, an analyst at industry research firm Gartner, said that Cyber Monday might be an "invented phenomenon" that began to encourage mass buying behavior, but it "appears to have worked."

It could become a permanent feature of the e-commerce landscape, he noted, which would offer yet another indication that the Web has emerged as a permanent part of the shopping experience.

That shopping experience includes not only direct purchasing online, but also researching online. The BIGresearch survey noted that the Internet will influence about 30 percent of holiday sales, whether by direct purchasing or by providing information.

#### World Faces "Cyber Cold War" Threat

A "cyber cold war" waged over the world's computers threatens to become one of the biggest threats to security in the next decade, according to a report published on Thursday.

About 120 countries are developing ways to use the Internet as a weapon to target financial markets, government computer systems and utilities, Internet security company McAfee said in an annual report.

Intelligence agencies already routinely test other states' networks looking for weaknesses and their techniques are growing more sophisticated every year, it said.

Governments must urgently shore up their defenses against industrial espionage and attacks on infrastructure.

"Cybercrime is now a global issue," said Jeff Green, senior vice president of McAfee Avert Labs. "It has evolved significantly and is no longer just a threat to industry and individuals but increasingly to national security."

The report said China is at the forefront of the cyber war. It said China has been blamed for attacks in the United States, India and Germany. China has repeatedly denied such claims.

"The Chinese were first to use cyber-attacks for political and military goals," James Mulvenon, director of the Center for Intelligence and Research in Washington, was quoted as saying in the report.

The report was compiled with input from academics and officials from Britain's Serious Organised Crime Agency, the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation and NATO.

Cyber-attacks on private and government Web sites in Estonia in April and May this year were "just the tip of the iceberg," the report warned.

Estonia said thousands of sites were affected in attacks aimed at crippling infrastructure in a country heavily dependent on the Internet.

The attacks appeared to have stemmed initially from Russia although the Kremlin denied any wrongdoing.

"The complexity and coordination seen was new," the report quoted an unnamed NATO source as saying. "There were a series of attacks with careful timing using different techniques and specific targets."

EU Information Society commissioner Viviane Reding said in June that what happened in Estonia was a wake-up call. NATO said "urgent work" was needed to improve defenses.

The McAfee report predicted that future attacks would be even more sophisticated.

"Attacks have progressed from initial curiosity probes to well-funded and well-organised operations for political, military, economic and technical espionage," it said.

The report is online at [www.mcafee.com/us/research/criminology\\_report/default.html](http://www.mcafee.com/us/research/criminology_report/default.html)

## NZ Police Question Teenager Over Global Cyber Crime

New Zealand police are questioning a man alleged to be the leader of a cyber crime network that infiltrated computers worldwide and brought down the system at a U.S. university.

Investigators in New Zealand, the United States and the Netherlands believe the 18-year-old wrote software used to attack over a million computers, causing damage of around NZ\$25 million (\$19 million), New Zealand Press Association said.

The software was allegedly used in bringing down the computer server at the University of Pennsylvania last year, New Zealand police said in a statement.

The man was the ringleader of a botnet, a network of computers infiltrated by a program that surreptitiously installs itself to allow a

hacker to control it, they said.

### Anti-Copying Programs May Slow Piracy

If the experience of the world's largest software vendor is any guide, the industry's best hope for reducing piracy rests with anti-copying technologies rather than in policing the legalistic user agreements that restrict how software can be used.

While a copyright crackdown by the Business Software Alliance and other industry players has been in force for years, piracy rates - as measured by BSA-commissioned studies - have stopped falling. So a few years ago, Microsoft Corp. began concentrating harder on locking software down through a program it calls its Genuine Software Initiative.

The technology has provoked some hostility, because it enables Microsoft to remotely examine user computers. After analyzing such information as the computer's manufacturer, hard drive serial number and Windows product identification, Microsoft can block access to certain software functions if it suspects the product was illegally copied.

Microsoft does not offer piracy statistics specific for its software. But the company says it appears its plan is working. As evidence, the company notes that in the last quarter, Windows sales were up 20 percent while worldwide PC sales were up only 14 to 16 percent. Microsoft said the difference reflected the fact that people with counterfeit copies of Windows were having to put the real thing on their existing computers.

Cori Hartje, who heads the genuine-software team for Microsoft, cautions that the lockdown is just part of the company's plan for reducing piracy. BSA-style enforcement and user education remain important elements, she said.

To be sure, other lockdown technologies - like requiring users to enter a specific numeric key when they install a piece of software on a PC - have been tried by multiple vendors, with limited success. Those programs often are hacked pretty quickly, or the keys get shared, greatly inhibiting their power to reduce improper copying.

But the industry also has not put as much effort into the subject as it might have. Bob Kruger, BSA's enforcement director from 1993 to 2005, said he often asked its member companies why they couldn't come up with ways to prevent copying. Kruger said the companies told him they feared new controls would annoy legitimate users and send market share to rivals that lacked copy blocks.

Logical as that decision may have been, it has put the onus on customers to track the various things their software licenses allow.

Now, however, Robert Holleyman, who has headed the BSA since 1990, said he was optimistic technology might soon have a better answer.

"It's not a silver bullet," he said. "At the same time, technology is increasingly a tool that is customer-friendly, that will reduce levels of piracy ... and make it easier for customers to interact with the product."

## One Laptop Per Child Sued for Patent Infringement

A Massachusetts company has sued the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) Association for patent infringement, charging the project with stealing its designs for a multilingual keyboard.

Lagos Analysis Corp., or Lancor, filed the lawsuit Thursday in the Federal High Court, Lagos Judicial Division in Nigeria, where the company owns a patent for a four shift-key keyboard, said Ad Oyegbola, Lancor's CEO.

OLPC illegally reverse-engineered the company's patented keyboard, which, with its four-shift keys, allows computers to better handle multiple languages, Oyegbola said. Lancor wants the Nigerian court to award "substantial" damages and issue a permanent injunction to prevent OLPC from manufacturing and selling its XO laptop.

Oyegbola said he hopes Lancor can reach a settlement with OLPC before the Nigerian court issues an injunction. OLPC could have "sought a license and gotten it for a minimal fee," he said. "We're hoping... they can come to their senses, and we sit down and come to a reasonable settlement."

Lancor, based in Natick, Massachusetts, has tried to reach a settlement with OLPC but did not get a "reasonable response" from the project, Oyegbola said.

OLPC released a statement, saying it has not yet seen the legal filings in the case. "OLPC has the utmost respect for the rights of intellectual property owners," Robert Fadel, OLPC director of finance and operations, said in the statement. "To OLPC's knowledge, all of the intellectual property used in the XO Laptop is either owned by OLPC or properly licensed. Until we have a copy of the claim and have had time to review it, we will not be commenting further on the matter."

The goal of the nonprofit OLPC, founded by Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor Nicholas Negroponte, is to donate laptops to children in developing nations. Through Dec. 31, residents of the U.S. and Canada can donate US\$400 and get one laptop for themselves, while sending a second to a child overseas.

In addition to the Nigerian lawsuit, Lancor is looking at filing a patent lawsuit in U.S. court within three weeks, if the case is not settled by then, Oyegbola said.

Lancor's Shift2 technology has been used to create region-specific keyboards called Konyin Multilingual Keyboards, according to the company. Lancor's lawsuit alleges that OLPC purchased two Konyin keyboards and used them to reverse-engineer the source codes for use in OLPC's XO Laptops.

Asked about the goals of OLPC, Nigerian citizen Oyegbola said he didn't have a strong opinion. Laptops can be useful to children in Africa, but many of them have more basic needs, he said.

"Children might not need a laptop," he said. "Maybe instead they need a classroom."

## Feds Cancel Amazon Customer ID Request

Federal prosecutors have withdrawn a subpoena seeking the identities of thousands of people who bought used books through online retailer Amazon.com Inc., newly unsealed court records show.

The withdrawal came after a judge ruled the customers have a First Amendment right to keep their reading habits from the government.

"The (subpoena's) chilling effect on expressive e-commerce would frost keyboards across America," U.S. Magistrate Judge Stephen Crocker wrote in a June ruling.

"Well-founded or not, rumors of an Orwellian federal criminal investigation into the reading habits of Amazon's customers could frighten countless potential customers into canceling planned online book purchases," the judge wrote in a ruling he unsealed last week.

Seattle-based Amazon said in court documents it hopes Crocker's decision will make it more difficult for prosecutors to obtain records involving book purchases. Assistant U.S. Attorney John Vaudreuil said Tuesday he doubted the ruling would hamper legitimate investigations.

Crocker, who unsealed documents detailing the showdown against prosecutors' wishes, said he believed prosecutors were seeking the information for a legitimate purpose. But he said First Amendment concerns were justified and outweighed the subpoena's law enforcement purpose.

"The subpoena is troubling because it permits the government to peek into the reading habits of specific individuals without their knowledge or permission," Crocker wrote. "It is an unsettling and un-American scenario to envision federal agents nosing through the reading lists of law-abiding citizens while hunting for evidence against somebody else."

Federal prosecutors issued the subpoena last year as part of a grand jury investigation into a former Madison official who was a prolific seller of used books on Amazon.com. They were looking for buyers who could be witnesses in the case.

The official, Robert D'Angelo, was indicted last month on fraud, money laundering and tax evasion charges. Prosecutors said he ran a used book business out of his city office and did not report the income. He has pleaded not guilty.

D'Angelo sold books through the Amazon Marketplace feature, and buyers paid Amazon, which took a commission.

"We didn't care about the content of what anybody read. We just wanted to know what these business transactions were," prosecutor Vaudreuil said Tuesday. "These were simply business records we were seeking to prove the case of fraud and tax crimes against Mr. D'Angelo."

The initial subpoena sought records of 24,000 transactions dating back to 1999. The company turned over many records but refused to identify the book buyers, citing their First Amendment right to keep their reading choices private.

Prosecutors later narrowed the subpoena, asking the company to identify a

sample of 120 customers.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Daniel Graber dismissed First Amendment concerns in an April letter to the company. He said D'Angelo, not Amazon, was the seller and prosecutors needed proof he sold books online.

Crocker brokered a compromise in which the company would send a letter to the 24,000 customers describing the investigation and asking them to voluntarily contact prosecutors if they were interested in testifying.

Prosecutors said they obtained the customer information they needed from one of D'Angelo's computers they seized early in the investigation. Vaudreuil said computer analysts initially failed to recover the information.

Still, Crocker scolded prosecutors in July for not looking for alternatives earlier.

"If the government had been more diligent in looking for workarounds instead of baring its teeth when Amazon balked, it's probable that this entire First Amendment showdown could have been avoided," he wrote.

The company asked Crocker to unseal the records after D'Angelo was indicted last month. Crocker granted the request over the objections of federal prosecutors, who wanted them kept secret.

"Shining some sunlight on the instant dispute reassures the public that someone is watching the watchers, and that this district's federal prosecutors are part of the solution, not part of the problem," he wrote.

#### Advertiser Settles Spam Charges For \$650,000

Online advertiser Adteractive will pay \$650,000 to settle charges that it used deceptive spam messages to lure people to its Web sites.

The company ran e-mail and Web ads offering free Sony Playstations, laptop computers, and even a \$1,000 check, implying that consumers had been selected as secret shoppers and would receive the free gear or cash after they tested the products, the FTC said in court filings.

The U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has been investigating this behavior, called "promotion-based lead generation," in the advertising industry for several years now. It is also taking a look at online advertiser ValueClick. It announced the settlement with Adteractive on Wednesday.

The Adteractive promotions contained offers such as, "Test and keep this flat-screen TV," and "Test it - Keep it - Microsoft Xbox 360," and "Congratulations! You've been chosen to receive a free \$1,000 check," the FTC said.

But actually collecting the freebies proved to be complicated. "After the consumer navigates [Adteractive's] 'optional' promotions - often taking up five or six consecutive computer screens, each with multiple offers - he or she eventually reaches a link that, when clicked, takes the consumer to the first of three tiers of offers in which the consumer must participate to obtain the free merchandise," the FTC said.

In order to get the really good prizes, consumers would have to do things like take out a one-year subscription to satellite TVs, or sign up for CD or DVD deliveries. "In most instances, it is impossible for the consumer to qualify for... free merchandise without spending money," the FTC said.

Founded in 2000, Adteractive was earning \$118 million in revenue in 2005, and boasted clients such as Blockbuster, Netflix, Club Med, BMG, and Citibank, according to an article in the San Francisco Business Times.

The company has been cooperating with the FTC since 2006 and is happy with the settlement, which spells out how the company can run these promotions in the future, said Greg Wharton, Adteractive's general counsel.

Online advertisers now have better guidelines on how to present their promotions to consumers, Wharton said. "The FTC has offered some guidance on how to use the word 'free' in advertising," he said. "At the end of the day, we're actually pleased to get this resolved."

Adteractive expects that the FTC will soon announce several other enforcement actions, Wharton added.

Not everyone was happy with Wednesday's news. If the FTC really expects to deter this kind of behavior, it's going to have to levy higher fines, according to Ben Edelman, an assistant professor at Harvard Business School.

"Time and again, the FTC accepts settlements that let defendants retain a portion of their ill-gotten gains," he said in an e-mail interview. "Tougher requirements are needed in order to make sure defendants actually regret their infractions, and to prevent others from turning to these ill-advised strategies."

The Adteractive promotions that caught the FTC's attention were run using the FreeGiftWorld.com and SamplePromotionsGroup.com domains. On Wednesday, both Web sites featured prominent displays for Sony Playstation Portables. The price? "Free... with purchase."

#### Testers See Windows XP Passing Vista

Microsoft Corp.'s Windows XP operating system is about to get faster and Windows Vista isn't, according to a report that caused a stir online this week as industry watchers speculated that a zippier XP could keep customers from upgrading to Vista.

Microsoft, however, said it's too early to evaluate the two service packs it plans to release next year.

Early versions are already in the hands of testers like Devil Mountain Software Inc., which helps big financial services companies track trading-floor computer performance.

Wellington, Fla.-based Devil Mountain Software ran several versions of XP and Vista through a test simulating common desktop computing tasks. It found the original Vista performed 50 percent to 100 percent slower than the prevalent XP Service Pack 2, or SP2.



Vista SP1, due out in the first quarter of 2008, barely improved the operating system's performance.

But XP SP3, scheduled for the first half of 2008, did improve on XP's earlier performance, running 10 percent faster than SP2.

That's a strike against Vista for IT professionals on the fence about switching, according to Craig Barth, the company's chief technology officer.

Kevin Kutz, director of Microsoft's Windows Client group, said the company is working on speeding up tasks like moving files between PCs, but it's a work in progress.

Michael Cherry, an analyst for research group Directions on Microsoft, said it's impossible to say if Microsoft has started tuning Vista SP1 for speed. Even if XP gets faster, consumers and businesses may still switch to Vista.

"It might be an acceptable thing to me if it were slightly slower but more stable," Cherry said.

Benjamin Gray, an analyst for Forrester Research, said businesses will upgrade to Vista regardless, to "stay current with Microsoft's support life cycle."

#### FBI Helps Bust International Botnet Ring

It's 10:00 p.m. Do you know what your teen is doing online? Hopefully, the answer is not "attracting the unwelcome interest of the FBI for operating an international botnet ring that infected millions of computers and stole approximately \$25 million from the bank accounts of unsuspecting victims."

That's the grim news received by the parents of an 18-year-old New Zealand man, identified in press reports only by his online ID "Akill." A collaborative investigation by the FBI and New Zealand authorities resulted in the search of Akill's residence earlier this week.

The teen was questioned about his role in the botnet operation, codenamed the "A-team," but was released without being charged. If police do file charges, Akill could face up to 10 years in prison.

A "bot" is a small, specialized computer program designed to perform a particular function. Many, like a search engine's webcrawler, are benign, but they can be designed to track user activity surreptitiously and communicate it to a third party.

Some are also designed to use a computer's spare processing power to send out spam or infect other computers. A "botnet" is a collection of commonly compromised computers; the individual controlling the "botnet" is typically referred to as the "botherder" - an appropriate metaphor for Akill, as sheep still outnumber New Zealanders by about twelve to one.

The investigation in New Zealand was part of a broader FBI operation, "Bot Roast," that targeted the criminal use of botnets. According to an FBI statement about the two-phased operation, the investigation has uncovered over \$20 million in economic losses and at least one million affected

computers.

"Today, botnets are the weapon of choice of cyber criminals," FBI Director Robert S. Mueller, III, said in the statement. "In Bot Roast II, we see the diverse and complex nature of crimes that are being committed through the use of botnets. Despite this enormous challenge, we will continue to be aggressive in finding those responsible for attempting to exploit unknowing Internet users."

"We've come to a point where we're comfortable with discussing some of the progress we've made so far," FBI spokesperson Paul Bresson said in a phone interview. "This was an operation undertaken two years ago in response to a growing problem of botnets."

Bresson said that, so far, eight individuals have been indicted, have pled guilty, or have been sentenced for their illegal bot activity.

Bresson stressed that consumers can play an important role in minimizing the risk of bot infection. "It's basic Computer Security 101," Bresson said. "The problem is that a lot of people go out and buy computers, and then simply plug them into the Internet without any idea of what's safe and what's not."

There are a lot of online safety resources available, Bresson pointed out, starting with the links at the FBI's main site. "We encourage the public to install antivirus software, a good firewall, and so on. Those are the basic things that every computer user should do." Otherwise, Bresson said, there's a real chance that without even knowing it, your unprotected computer could be facilitating a crime.

"And that's not something we think people want their computer doing," he added.

#### Teens Take Bullying To The Internet, Study Finds

Hateful text messages, abusive e-mails and cyber-gossip are giving bullies new power over their victims - even in the supposed safety of their own homes, U.S. researchers reported on Tuesday.

And most of the victims are themselves new, with two-thirds of children who report such harassment saying they had not been bullied before in other ways.

Schools and parents must work together to find ways to stop such behavior, without robbing children and teens of valuable Internet access, the researchers agreed.

"Internet bullying has emerged as a new and growing form of social cruelty," Kirk Williams and Nancy Guerra of the University of California at Riverside wrote in one of a series of reports published in the Journal of Adolescent Health.

The reports, from researchers organized by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, show a 50 percent increase in the number of kids aged 10 to 17 who said they were harassed online - from 6 percent in 2000 to 9 percent in 2005.

"Youth harassed online were significantly more likely to also report two or more detentions or suspensions, and skipping school in the previous year," Michele Ybarra and colleagues at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore reported in another study in the journal.

"Especially concerning, youth who reported being targeted by Internet harassment were eight times more likely than all other youth to concurrently report carrying a weapon to school in the past 30 days," added Ybarra's team, who interviewed 1,500 10- to 15-year-olds.

They found that 64 percent of those who reported having been bullied online were not victims of physical or verbal aggression in person. That makes for a whole new population of victims, the researchers agreed.

An extreme example of the problem occurred in October 2006, when 13-year-old Megan Meier of Dardenne Prairie, Missouri hanged herself after receiving vitriolic Internet messages from someone posing as a teen-age boy. The town passed a measure making online harassment illegal.

"The anonymity provided by new technology limits a victim from responding in a way that may ordinarily stop a peer's aggressive behavior or influence the probability of future acts, which provides an advantage to the perpetrator," the CDC's Corinne David-Ferdon and Marci Feldman Hertz wrote.

"The primary recommendation we have for parents is to talk to their kids," Ferdon said in a telephone interview. "Talk to them about where they go on the Internet, appropriate standards of behavior."

Schools should also become involved and should add cyber-bullying to any policies they may already have on bullying and other forms of aggression, said Hertz.

Hertz and Ferdon said school districts in Florida, South Carolina, Utah and Oregon are creating new policies to deal with cyber-bullying.

Total bans on using the Internet or text-messaging are unlikely to work, she added. "Technology has a lot of benefits for young people," Hertz said. "They can make social connections that they otherwise might not have the opportunity to make."

Patricia Agatston and colleagues at Clemson University in South Carolina interviewed 148 teens in depth and found that teens often did not tell their parents about bullying for fear of losing online privileges.

### Web Site Ranks Stupid Holiday Gifts

From Mother Teresa breath spray to a screaming rubber chicken, manufacturers come up with stockings full of stupid gifts in time for the holidays with one Web site dedicated to finding the most idiotic.

Web site Stupid.com, which claims finding a truly stupid gift is an art form, on Monday unveiled its list of the top 10 "stupidest" holiday gifts for 2007.

"These gifts are so ridiculously stupid that everyone will want them," said Stupid.com's founder Gary Apple in a statement.

Here is stupid.com's top 10 which is not endorsed by Reuters.

1. Mistletoe To Go

In the mood for love but on the go? Consider this portable mistletoe. This attractive arrangement of faux mistletoe comes with a suction cup that attaches to your forehead.

2. The Hillary Nutcracker

Love her or hate her, this is a new take on Democratic presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton who, in holiday tradition, is made into a nutcracker.

3. Slingshot Monkey

The Slingshot Monkey is a stuffed monkey dressed like a superhero. It flies up to 50 feet and screams along the way.

4. Larry Craig Action Figure

The talking Senator Larry Craig action figure wears a T-shirt with his declaration: "I Am Not Gay." His limbs are bendable and he delivers a portion of his news conference after pleading guilty to lewd behavior in an airport bathroom.

5. Uncle Oinker's Gummy Bacon Candy

One of America's favorite smoked-meat product has been reproduced as a candy. Uncle Oinkers Gummy Bacon comes packaged the same way as real bacon and even looks like real bacon.

6. Inflatable Moosehead

No need to go through the expense and trouble of tracking down a moose and shooting it dead when you can simply buy an inflatable moose head for the trophy wall.

7. Electronic Yodeling Pickle

The electronic yodeling pickle is a 6-1/2" plastic pickle with a high-tech interior. When you press the pickle's button it belts out a yodel reminiscent of the Swiss Alps.

8. Poo-lar Bear Candy

It's a plastic polar bear that you fill with candy poop so when you press down on the bear's hind quarters, he poops out a tasty treat.

9. Get Off the Phone Excuse Machine

If you have trouble getting off the phone from some people, this small electronic device could be the answer. Press a button for "Whoops, there's the door" or "I can't hear you, you're breaking up," and you can get off the hook.

10. USB dancer

This bikini-wearing dancer plugs into your computer's USB port and

audio port and when sound plays on your system, she dances and gyrates around the pole.

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